

received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN503 NAVY nominations (13) beginning WILLIAM J. BAILEY, JR., and ending CHRISTOPHER D. TUCKER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN504 NAVY nominations (21) beginning GINA A. BUONO, and ending SANDRA F. WILLIAMS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN505 NAVY nominations (6) beginning DAVID J. ALLEN, and ending TRACIE M. ZIELINSKI, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN506 NAVY nominations (5) beginning DAVID M. BUZZETTI, and ending ERIC R. VETTER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN507 NAVY nominations (11) beginning DAVID E. BAILEY, and ending CHRISTOPHER J. STEWART, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN508 NAVY nominations (8) beginning JOHN R. ADAMS, and ending MARY C. WISE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN509 NAVY nominations (7) beginning SEAN A. COX, and ending LUIS A. PEREZ, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN510 NAVY nominations (13) beginning ELIZABETH W. BUNDT, and ending MICHAEL G. WATSON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 22, 2017.

PN552 NAVY nomination of Miguel A. Santiesteban, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of June 5, 2017.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO MAUREEN RILEY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a remarkable leader in the airport industry, Maureen Riley, who is retiring on June 30. Maureen is not only an accomplished businesswoman, but also a well-respected collaborator who had the vision and tenacity to get a \$3.1 billion airport redevelopment program off the ground at Salt Lake City International Airport.

For more than 30 years, Maureen's professional life has been marked by many significant achievements in the airport industry. She has distinguished herself as a trusted consultant for numerous airports across the country. She has also served as deputy executive

director at Orlando International Airport and, most recently, as executive director for the Salt Lake City Department of Airports.

Maureen believes in collaboration and sharing information to create better operating results. She has served in top leadership positions for the Airports Council International-North America, ACI-NA, a trade association of airports around the globe. She also served as a member of the ACI World Board of Directors for 4 years.

I first met Maureen after she took over the helm at Salt Lake City's Department of Airports, a position she has served in for more than a decade. During this time, Maureen guided the airport through the planning, financing, and now construction of the \$3.1 billion airport redevelopment program.

Maureen is an exceptional manager who can be credited with gaining approval from the airlines to construct the new airport, which is paramount to the success of Utah's economy. She has the unique ability to bring people together and has been able to persuade the airlines, architects, financiers, and construction teams to get the construction program off the ground. Maureen never backs away from a challenge and does what is necessary to keep a project on track and on budget. She is well respected by her colleagues and is known as being a tough negotiator. As one airline executive once told Maureen, "It is hard to resist your reasonableness."

Maureen is passionate about providing excellent customer service to airport passengers. She is committed to seeing that a project is done right the first time and is not afraid of saying no when a project or proposal does not make sense. Maureen is also committed to promoting women in the workforce and encourages the use of gender-neutral language in meetings by contractors, consultants, and staff.

Maureen has been the driving force to ensure the airport redevelopment program leaves a positive lasting impression on passengers and meets Salt Lake City's passenger growth well into the future.

Maureen Riley is leaving a lasting legacy as she steps down from her position with the Salt Lake City Department of Airports. I want to wish Maureen well in her retirement and send my best wishes to her and her family on this momentous occasion.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, the Senate recently passed the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. This legislation is intended to improve the VA by strengthening the process of holding nonperforming VA employees accountable, but it does this by removing certain due process protections that are currently in place to protect VA employees from unlawful discrimi-

nation or retaliation. Dr. David Shulkin, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, asked for this authority to reform the personnel system, and the Senate obliged his request.

In Hawaii we have a much different and more pressing problem that this legislation does not address, and that is the challenge we face with recruitment and retention of VA leaders and filling vacant positions at the VA.

Nowhere is this challenge more evident than in the VA's yearlong search to recruit a new executive director for the Pacific Island Health Care System in Honolulu. During this time, six executive directors from six different VA healthcare systems on the mainland rotated through Hawaii on an interim basis. The VA said that its search dragged on for so long because it faced a shortage of individuals with the right skills to fill these medical director positions, but that is no excuse. The VA should have been doing more to develop a pool of qualified people to fill vacant medical director positions. Failure to find long-term, stable leadership undermines accountability not only at the highest level, but across the entire healthcare system.

I am also bothered by the decision to rotate medical directors in from other healthcare systems, even on an interim basis. This stopgap measure failed to ensure the proper leadership required to provide long-term direction for the Pacific Island Health Care System and to make sure that there was someone to hold accountable for the delivery of services to the more than 120,000 veterans that the VA is responsible for in the Pacific. Those veterans and their families deserve better.

Leadership recruitment is not the only staffing issue we face. In its September 2016 report on the Pacific Island Health Care System, the VA's Office of the Inspector General specifically noted that recruitment and retention of staff is an ongoing challenge across our neighbor islands, in large part due to cost of living, distance, and physical isolation. At the time of its report, the OIG noted that there were 75 unfilled positions at community-based outpatient clinics across Hawaii. These are vacant positions at clinics that directly affect veterans' access to healthcare.

I worry that removing important due process protections for VA employees will only make this problem worse, because, where there are already issues in physician recruitment and retention, the VA could compete through the promise of a stable job, in an environment free from unlawful discrimination or retaliation. Knowing that those protections are in place is not only helpful to attracting recruits, but it is helpful to promoting a culture free of inequity and intimidation because people know they will be held to account for their actions. That kind of culture is critical to recruitment and retention because the last thing the VA wants is hard-working employees to search for